

## **“Magic as an Element of Political Debate in the Historiography and Imperial Biography of the 1st - 5th Centuries AD” - Summary**

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the role that magic plays in the works of the Roman historians and biographers, based on the three selected writers: Tacitus, Suetonius and Ammianus Marcellinus. A chapter is devoted to every one of them, with a separate introduction and conclusions. The method used to study the works of these authors is the so-called close reading, with a particular emphasis put on the vocabulary and the structure of the text. Equally important are the allusions and the intertextuality, which allow for a significantly deeper understanding of the vision and aims of a given author. Though the thesis concentrates on literary studies, I do not abstain from referencing the thoughts of specialists in the religious scholarship, which allow me to better interpret the vocabulary of the examined works. Magic, as I believe, cannot be studied in separation from religion, as understanding the analyzed texts requires placing them in the context of Roman religious norms and the religious innovation of the emperors.

The first chapter is devoted to two works of Tacitus, the *Histories* and the *Annals*. In a short introduction I summarize the history of studies on religion and magic in Tacitus, which I follow up with my own theory that there exists a connection between the choice of Venus and Apollo as tutelary deities of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the importance of magic, as well as widely understood divination, under the rule of the Julio-Claudian emperors, as depicted by Tacitus. Though the fragmentary state of preservation of the *Histories* makes the full analysis of the text impossible, I think that the book establishes a paradigm later used in the *Annals*. Vespasian, just as Augustus, selects as his patron the god of medicine in order to “heal” the empire after the year of the four emperors, similarly to how Augustus “healed” it after the civil wars. The language of ritual pollution and healing, reflecting the imperial propaganda, is used in the *Histories* to depict the catastrophic condition of the state after Nero’s reign and the salutary influence of the Flavians on the “sick” body of the empire. Yet the usage of the term *devotio* shows that the healing could be accomplished only through human sacrifice, i.e. the spillage of Roman blood. I analyze also in detail the magical vocabulary connected with Venus (such as *venena*, *blandimenta*, the words of binding) and, to a lesser extent, Apollo (the opposition *remedium-venenum*, *carmen*), focusing on their use in the description of the emperors and the imperial opposition. Apart from these detailed vocabulary studies, encompassing both *Histories* and *Annals*, I concentrate on the picture of the individual emperors, devoting to every one of them a separate subchapter. I argue that the Tacitean portrayal of magic under the reign of the individual rulers mirrors their own character and habits. For example, Nero’s fascination with poetry (*carmina*) is

reflected in the frequency of accusations based on the use of *carmina* in the trials for *crimen laesae maiestatis*. The detailed analysis of the Tacitean *corpus* presented in this chapter is too voluminous to be easily summarized here. The chapter is complemented by three appendices, providing the analysis of the structure of the trials under Tiberius, Claudius and Nero and their connection with magic.

The second chapter is devoted to Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*. I concentrate here primarily on the structural analysis of the biographies, in which two elements play a crucial role: the presence of "categories" which define an emperor-magician (*venena*, the colour purple, "spellbinding mimesis", "the lover of the impossible", human sacrifice, *superstitio*, some supernatural abilities, a return to life after the death), as well as the ring structure. Apart from these elements an important role is played by intertextuality of Suetonius and his self-allusiveness within the *Lives* themselves. Another important factor is the role of the tutelary deities assumed by the individual emperors, who form a "mirror" for their protégés: e.g. I explore the connections between Isis and Jove in the biography of Caligula, which are of paramount importance to the interpretation of the text. The chapter is divided into a series of subchapters, each devoted to an individual *Life*.

The third chapter is devoted to the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. I point out certain lexical similarities which seem to allude to the magical vocabulary of Tacitus. Yet the main focus of my research does not rest so much on the vocabulary stratum as on the structure of Ammianus' oeuvre. I argue that the author uses well-defined paradigms in his description of the oppressors of magic and the trials for magic, employing them consistently throughout his work. I also analyze the partially positive picture of the healing magic-theurgy in the portrayal of Julian the Apostate, as well as the negative portraits of the Christian emperors.

I concentrate primarily on analyzing the portrayals of the individual emperors, though I try to show not only how they are presented as emperors-magicians and persecutors of magic, but also as the victims of magical practices. Magic seems to constitute an important element of the narrative on the power struggle and imperial opposition. The research on the vocabulary and structure of the works of Tacitus, Suetonius and Ammianus allows me to prove how fundamental a role in their narratives is played by the contrast between religion and *superstitio*, tradition and religious innovation.